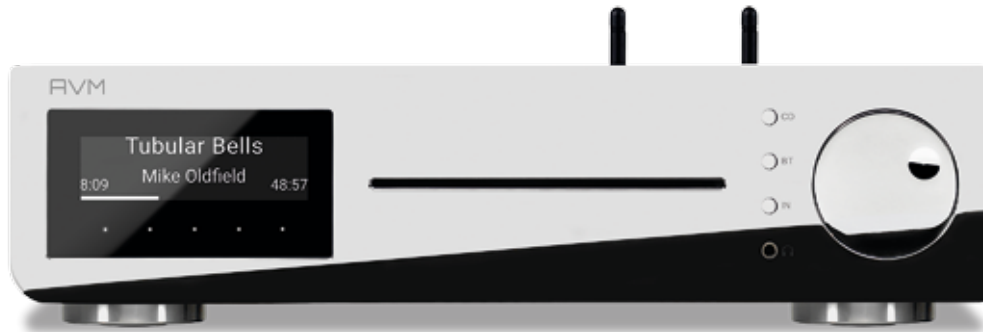


AUDIO  
FILE

Streaming DAC/CD player/amplifier. Rated at 140W/8ohm  
 Made by: AVM Audio Video Manufaktur GmbH, Germany  
 Supplied by: The Professional Monitor Company Ltd  
 Telephone: 01767 686300  
 Web: www.avm-audio.com; www.pmc-speakers.com  
 Price: £5950



# AVM CS 2.3

Replacing the Inspiration CS 2.2 model, AVM's Inspiration CS 2.3 all-in-one, selling for £5950 in black or silver, or extra for its chrome 'Cellini' finish, is based around the latest streaming platform from the high-end German marque. Designated the 'X-Stream Engine', it's already in use in the flagship Ovation CS 8.3 system, as well as various other networked products in the brand's lineup.

With the upgrade comes a new control app, which you'll likely end up using since AVM's IR/RF remote, complete with docking recharge station, is a pricey optional extra. And it's this new 'engine' and app

'It treated us to just the right balance of intimacy and passion'

that's at the heart of turning the CS 2.2 into the 2.3 model tested here.

As supplied, the system handles network audio, Bluetooth and AirPlay 2, and can stream from HighResAudio, Qobuz, Spotify, Tidal and Internet radio. We're promised this provision might be expanded, as the unit can be upgraded via USB or its network connection. Its comprehensive specification includes a slot-loading CD player based on a dedicated TEAC drive and, for a true 'just add speakers' system, there's a 2x140W-rated Class D power plant capable of driving a wide range of speakers.

The CS 2.3 also has a healthy set of inputs – not always a given

with systems of this kind – including HDMI for TV sound and MM/MC phono, the latter with adjustable loading via plug-in adapters. There are also two line inputs, a front-panel headphone jack, and both fixed and variable preamp outputs.

On the digital side, the X-Stream Engine brings file capability up to DSD128, and in addition to the Ethernet/Wi-Fi network audio connection there's a USB-A port for audio playback from storage devices. 'Conventional' digital inputs and outputs are provided on optical and coaxial sockets.

Buried in the CS 2.3's menu are configuration options including input sensitivity and renaming; the ability to skip unused inputs; start-up and max volume settings; and tone control and parametric loudness. If all that gives the impression of a device both skilfully designed and thoroughly considered, that's

exactly what the Inspiration CS 2.3 is, right down to AVM's superb standard of finish.

## BIG-BONED STREAMER

Whether with CD, streaming services, music from local stores or indeed vinyl, this system's sound is smooth and precise. There are rivals able to extract more detail from what's being played, but there's no arguing with the confidence and sheer musical impact the CS 2.3 can muster, as your attention is directed to the performance, not the minutiae of the hi-fi experience.

Via the sparse arrangements of The Specials' *Protest Songs 1924-2012* set [Island Records 3840699]

**ABOVE: Seen in its premium 'Cellini' (chrome) livery, the CS 2.3 has CD, BT and input selection buttons, plus a multi-function rotary. Configuration is possible via the display or, better, via AVM's RC X app. The slot-loading TEAC CD drive is joined inside by an ESS9038 DAC, X-Stream processor, phono stage, preamp, and screened Pascal Class D amplifier modules**

the CS 2.3 delivered a big-boned presentation, notably with the cover of Talking Heads' 'Listening Wind', where the instrumentation was rendered as impressively as the close harmonies and the hushed vocals of Hannah Hu. And with Lynval Golding's take on 'Get Up, Stand Up', it treated us to the right balance of intimacy and passion.

A fine handling of timbres and textures was on show with Bernardi Fumagalli Gattone Trio's update of Bernstein's *West Side Story* [Forward Music FMICA990012101; DSD128]. Here, the CS 2.3 conveyed the live, straight-to-DSD recording with an immediacy to the sound, enhanced by the speed and control of the rhythms. It might be warm and refined, rather than upfront, but it boasts a deftness of touch and tangible dynamic ability.

So: insight without overt 'hi-fi-ness' is what this system does so well. Yes, there's plenty of information on offer, and the sound is always precise as well as sumptuous, but what this does is contribute to the music, rather than distracting from it. It's not all about an even-handed delivery of super-clean recordings, either: on the *Total (From Joy Division To New Order)* compilation [Rhino 5052498647958], it slammed out the dense lo-fi mixes at room-shaking levels, and generated plenty of excitement in the process.

## VERDICT

Generous and beautifully controlled music-making, superb build quality, and a comprehensive feature set – this luxurious little system has the wherewithal to win over buyers, even in the face of more keenly-priced competition. ⏻

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	145W / 190W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	248W / 524W / 475W / 250W
Output imp. (20Hz–20kHz, Pre/Amp)	46ohm / 0.04-0.28ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz–20kHz/100kHz)	–0.07 to –0.01dB/–5.9dB
Digital jitter (CD / S/PDIF)	118psec / 11psec
A-wtd S/N ratio (DAC/Amp)	110.2dB (0dBFS) / 81.8dB (0dBW)
Distortion (DAC, 0dBFS/Amp, 10W)	0.00012-0.0006% / 0.002-0.09%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	14W / 326W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	340x100x320mm / 7.1kg